https://doi.org/10.53656/his2023-3-1-pop

Civilization Boundaries
Цивилизационни граници

THE POPULAR PREACHERS AND STORYTELLERS (*QUṢṢĀṢ*) – THE EARLIEST HISTORIANS, EXEGETES, AND LEGAL SPECIALISTS IN ISLAM

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Abstract. Popular preachers and storytellers (*quṣṣāṣ*; sg. *qāṣṣ*) appeared towards the middle of the first/seventh century and quickly became the earliest informal historians and exegetes in Islam. Before long, the Umayyad caliphs recognized the political impact of their sermons and institutionalized preaching and storytelling (*qaṣaṣ*) as a state office. Notwithstanding this fact, informal *qaṣaṣ* did not vanish altogether, sometimes giving voice to pious discontent with the ruling dynasty. In the present study, I demonstrate that during the Marwānid period *qaṣaṣ* was combined with judgeship and other official positions. A comparison with documentary sources suggests that during the same period the term *qāḍī* (judge) was not yet used, and it may have been retroactively grafted onto the Umayyad past by early ʿAbbāsid historical literature. Literary sources also imply the existence of regional hierarchies of *quṣṣāṣ*. During the second/eighth century, *qaṣaṣ* lost its significance to the professional collection and transmission of traditions (*ḥadīth*) for the needs of Islamic jurisprudence and exegesis. *Ḥadīth* transmitters and critics eventually came to dismiss the *quṣṣāṣ* with contempt and derision.

Keywords: qāṣṣ; *quṣṣāṣ*; storyteller; preacher; *qāḍī*; judge; *ḥadīth*; exegesis

The foundation and rapid geographic expansion of the Islamic community (*umma*) made it part of global political events in the first/seventh century[1], stimulating historical self-reflection. The *umma*'s involvement with the past found an initial expression in the narratives of the popular preachers and storytellers (*quṣṣāṣ*, sg. *qāṣṣ*),[2] who collected and retold, in a homiletic context, prophetic legends and historical reports about early Islam. Thus, the *quṣṣāṣ* became the first informal historians in Islam. Biographical reports about first/seventh-century *quṣṣāṣ* should be treated with caution, but even if replete with imaginary details, they appear to include a glimpse of the earliest dissemination of Muslim traditions about the Prophet Muḥammad and the glorious era of the first conquests (the *sīra-maghāzī* epic).

Scholars disagree on whether preaching and storytelling (*qaṣaṣ*) originated with the Prophet and the first caliphs[3]. Precarious evidence for the presence of *qaṣaṣ*

during that period is found in the report according to which Abū Sufyān b. Ḥarb (d. ca. 32/653), who led the Meccan opposition to Muḥammad in the 620s, served as an army *qāṣṣ* in the battle of Yarmūk (15/636) (al-Ṭabarī 1979 – 1987, 3:397). Apart from assuming an institutionalization of *qaṣaṣ*, which cannot have occurred at so early a date, the tradition, as noted by ʿAthamina, is politically slanted. Abū Sufyān is the father of the first Umayyad caliph, Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān (r. 41 – 60/661 – 680), and his participation in the conquests portrays him as a virtuous Muslim, thereby concealing his unholy past (ʿAthamina 1992, p. 57).

Muslim biographical dictionaries point to the Prophet's Companion Tamīm al-Dārī (d. 40/660) as the first *qāṣṣ* in Islam (al-Maqrīzī 1998, 4:18). A former Christian, Tamīm purportedly converted to Islam in 9/630. During the reign of the second caliph, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 13 – 23/634 – 644), he is said to have taught and commented on the Qurʾān, as well as transmitted traditions (*ḥadīth*) about the Prophet (ʿAthamina 1992, 55, 60; Juynboll 2007, 625). These biographical reports notwithstanding, attempts to reconstruct and date Tamīm's traditions have met with unsurmountable difficulties. Juynboll's investigation of the chain of transmission (*isnād*; pl. *asānīd*) of one of these traditions alerts us to the daunting challenges that one encounters when working with such early material (Juynboll 2007, pp. 625, 627). The tradition cannot be associated with a valid common transmitter, such as Tamīm al-Dārī. It surfaces for the first time in Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālisī's (Basra; d. 203 – 204/819 – 820) *Musnad*, which suggests the second half of the second/eighth century—that is, an entire century after Tamīm's death—as the earliest period of its circulation. But the uncertainty surrounding Tamīm is not limited to the tradition examined by Juynboll. Armstrong (2017, 202 and *passim*) has demonstrated that reports about Tamīm being the first *qāṣṣ* are conflicting and polemically charged. Rather than referring to events during al-Tamīm's lifetime, they seem to have taken shape in response to intellectual and political concerns that arose after his death. As noted by Charles Pellat, Tamīm is a "legendary figure," and the reports that describe him as the first *qāṣṣ* should be taken with a grain of salt (Pellat 1997, p. 734).

Al-Aswad b. Sarīʿ (Basra; d. 36 or 42/657 or 663) would seem to have practiced *qaṣaṣ* around the same time as Tamīm al-Dārī. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728) described al-Aswad as the first *qāṣṣ* in Basra. Al-Aswad preached in the back part of the mosque (Ibn Saʿd 2001, 9: 41). His claim that he took part in four raids (*ghazawāt*) of the Prophet (Ibn Ḥanbal 1996 – 2001, 24:356 – 357, no. 15589) suggests that he retold tales from the *maghāzī* epic. This statement, however, is problematic as it appears at the beginning of a tradition dealing with predestination (*qadar*), an issue that attracted theological attention towards the end of the first/seventh century (Van Ess 1975, p. 181), that is, at least four decades after al-Aswad's death date. Al-Aswad's participation in the Prophet's raids functions only as a historicizing introduction to the theological material, which is otherwise

linked with Abū Hurayra (Van Ess 1975, p. 105), making it difficult to establish that the tradition absorbed a genuine historical memory of al-Aswad.

ʿUbayd b. ʿUmayr (d. 68/687) ranks among the first/seventh century's most renowned *quṣṣāṣ*. His sermons in the Prophet's mosque in Mecca, which began after morning prayer, were so impassioned that ʿAbdallāh b. ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (Medina; d. 73/693) wept in response (al-Fākihī 1994, 2:339; Ibn Saʿd 2001, 4:151). However, not everyone was as prone to shedding tears as the second caliph's son. The *qāṣṣ*' incessant homilies might irritate the audience; for this reason, ʿĀʾisha, the Prophet's widow, admonished ʿUbayd, "Preach one day and pass over the next. Do not pester the people!" (al-Fākihī 1994, 2:339). In 64/683, after the Umayyad forces had battered Mecca with catapults crippling the Kaʿba, ʿUbayd b. ʿUmayr delivered scathing sermons against them. Dismayed by his anathemas, Syrian soldiers urged ʿUbayd to "stop reproaching God's deputy on earth, for he commands more respect than the temple" (*lā tanaqqaṣ khalīfat*^{a} *l-lāh*^{i} *fī arḍ*^{i}*-hi fa-inna-hu aʿẓam*^{u} *ḥurmat*^{an} *min al-bayt*) (al-Balādhurī 1996, 5:364). The Syrians' belief that the caliph reigns by divine right is noteworthy, but equally more so is their attitude towards the temple, which will strike any adherent of the later orthodoxy as contemptuous. The surprising Syrian preference of the caliph to the Kaʿba bears witness to the report's antiquity and accuracy.

Juynboll and Schoeler have shown that ʿUbayd b. ʿUmayr put into circulation the earliest reports about the Prophet's first revelation (Juynboll 1994, p. 162; Schoeler 1996, 108f). Juynboll has also noted the virtual absence of *isnād*s on the authority of ʿUbayd in the second/eighth-century biographies of the Prophet, which is odd given that ʿUbayd is reckoned among the founders of that literary genre. Juynboll (1994, p. 162) attributed this anomaly to two interrelated factors: the *quṣṣāṣ*' declining reputation and the chronology of the *isnād*'s introduction as a tool for authenticating traditions. To be sure, the *isnād* came into being shortly after ʿUbayd's death and gained currency during the second/eighth century (Pavlovitch 2018). Hence, ʿUbayd's stories would have lacked *isnād*s, but the same holds true for his contemporaries' reports that made their way into the second/eighth-century biographies of the Prophet. It is reasonable to believe that ʿUbayd b. ʿUmayr transmitted only a few traditions.

The first/seventh-century *quṣṣāṣ*' activities had obvious political ramifications: The sermons delivered by the *quṣṣāṣ* in the mosque might reinforce the authority of the rulers while undermining the position of their foes. Not surprisingly, a tradition in Ibn Abī Shayba's (Kūfa; d. 235/849) early *Muṣannaf* attributes to ʿAbdallāh b. ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb the statement that *qaṣaṣ* came into being during the first civil war (35 – 40/656 – 661) (Ibn Abī Shayba 1989, 5:290; for more, see al-Najm 1967, 168). Although not documenting the names of the first *quṣṣāṣ*, the tradition allows us to think that their stories were crafted to support the main antagonists in the war, the fourth caliph, ʿAlī (r. 35 – 40/656 – 661), and his Syrian adversary,

Muʿāwiya (on which see al-Maqrīzī 1998, 4:18). Ibn ʿUmar's claim receives a factual underpinning in a report that Muʿāwiya placed *qaṣaṣ* under official control shortly before the beginning of his reign, when he appointed Sulaym b. ʿItr (d. 75/694 – 695) as both the judge (*qāḍī*; pl. *quḍāt*) and *qāṣṣ* of Egypt in 40/660 – 661 (Ibn Yūnus 2001, 1:218f, no. 586). Incidentally, official appointment did not always imply blind loyalty. If we are to trust a report markedly hostile to the notorious Umayyad governor of Iraq and the East, al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf (d. 95/714), by the beginning of ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān's caliphate (65 – 86/685 – 705), Sulaym b. ʿItr and other *quṣṣāṣ* were recounting the biographies of Abū Bakr and ʿUmar in a manner that al-Ḥajjāj found so detrimental to the Umayyad caliph's authority that he volunteered to kill Sulaym and "his ilk" (Ibn ʿAsākir 1995 – 2001, 72:273).

Muʿāwiya's successors followed his example. ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān once boastfully declared before Ghuḍayth b. al-Ḥārith (Homs; d. 65/685) that he had persuaded the people to accept two innovations: the preacher raising his hands from the pulpit during the Friday prayer, and *qaṣaṣ* being delivered after early and late afternoon prayers (Ibn Ḥanbal 1996 – 2001, 28:172, no. 16 970). It is unclear whether the *qaṣaṣ* mentioned by ʿAbd al-Malik took place daily or only on Friday, but, in any case, the caliph insisted on its regularity. Insofar as ʿAbd al-Malik's interlocutor, Ghuḍayth b. al-Ḥārith, died shortly after this caliph's accession, one may reasonably conclude that *qaṣaṣ* was institutionalized by one of ʿAbd al-Malik's predecessors, most likely, Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān.

In another instance of institutionalization, the Umayyad governor of Egypt, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān (r. 64 – 85/684 – 704), appointed ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥujayra al-Khawlānī (d. 83/702) as *qāḍī*, *qāṣṣ*, and treasurer, and paid him 200 dinars for each office (Ibn Yūnus 2001, 1:299f, no. 811). Ibn Ḥujayra read his sermons from a special scroll, which was produced in 76/695 – 696 on the governor's orders. The scroll was kept in the governor's residence, taken to the mosque each Friday for Ibn Ḥujayra's sermon, and returned to its repository thereafter (al-Maqrīzī 1998, 4:19). When Ibn Ḥujayra's father learned of his son's appointment as a *qāṣṣ*, he thanked God with the words, "Praise be to God, my son preaches and exhorts." By contrast, the news that Ibn Ḥujayra had become a *qāḍī* drove the father to lament his son's fate: "My son has perished and causes [others] to perish!" (al-Kindī 1908, p. 315). The negative perception of judgeship as an office whose holder is exposed to the rulers' whims is commonplace in the biographies of scholars (for more examples regarding *quṣṣāṣ*, see Armstrong 2017, 128ff). On the other hand, the positive attitude towards the *qāṣṣ* is striking, especially when compared with the numerous disparaging reports that will be circulated in the second/eighth century and afterward. Unlike the *quṣṣāṣ* of the later centuries, who came to be derided as flashy vulgarizers, their first/seventh-century predecessors were praised for transmitting narratives about the Prophet in an exhortatory and exegetical framework.

Following Ibn Ḥujayra's death in Muḥarram 83/February 702, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān appointed as *the qāṣṣ* and *qāḍī* of Egypt another member of the tribe Khawlān, Mālik b. Sharāḥīl b. ʿAmr (d. ?), a companion of ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, who took part in the conquest of Egypt (Ibn Yūnus 2001, 1:424). Mālik lost his position only a year later (al-Kindī 1908, 322), most likely for failing to meet the governor's expectations. *Qaṣaṣ* and judgeship were still combined in Egypt at the beginning of the second/eighth century. In 115/733 – 734, they were entrusted to Tawba b. Namir al-Ḥaḍramī (d. 120/737) (Ibn Yūnus 2001, 1:77). As a Qurʾān reciter and *qāṣṣ*, Tawba received three dinars a month from the stable's funds (al-Maqrīzī 1998, 4:19). When Tawba died, the offices were given to Khayr b. Nuʿaym (d. 137/754 – 755), who held them until 127/745. He was deposed upon the accession of the last Umayyad caliph, Marwān al-Ḥimār (r. 127 – 132/744 – 750) (al-Kindī 1908, 348, 352). In the following year, Egypt's new governor, Ḥawthara b. Suhayl, appointed ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Sālim al-Jayshānī (d. 143/760 – 761) as *qāṣṣ* and *qāḍī* (Ibn Yūnus 2001, 1:302).

Illuminating details about the *qāṣṣ*' office are included in the report about ʿUqba b. Muslim's (d. ca. 120/737) dismissal as the *qāṣṣ* in the mosque of Fusṭāṭ. Our sources do not date the incident, but taking ʿUqba's death date as a point of departure, one may reasonably place his tenure in the first two decades of the second century H. Upon learning that he was dismissed, ʿUqba complained that he had only been a *qāṣṣ* who led the people's prayer. If he made it longer while they wanted it shorter, he would shorten it, and if he made it shorter while they wanted it longer, he would lengthen it (Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam 1922, 243). ʿUqba's statement indicates that, while he led the prayer in the mosque, no judiciary functions were assigned to him. Interestingly, ʿUqba is described as being in charge of the *quṣṣāṣ* (Lecker 2003, 71; cf. Armstrong 2107, 127). During the tenure of ʿUqba's successor in Fusṭāṭ, ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAyyāsh (d. 170/786 – 787), Khayr b. Nuʿaym held the offices of the *qāḍī* and *qāṣṣ* of Egypt. The foregoing reports attest to the existence of a network of *quṣṣāṣ* headed by the *qāṣṣ* of Egypt.

Quṣṣāṣ were officially appointed in Damascus as early as ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān's caliphate. Abū Zurʿa al-Dimashqī reports that this caliph removed from the office of *qaṣaṣ* Abū Idrīs al-Khawlānī (Damascus; d. 80/699 – 700), because he disobeyed the caliph's order to raise his hands while preaching (Abū Zurʿa al-Dimashqī 1980, 2:604, no. 1713). From another report, we learn that the order in question enjoined the *quṣṣāṣ* to preach against the caliph's enemies while raising their hands in a dramatic gesture (al-Maqrīzī 1998, 4:19). What triggered the storytellers' opposition to the caliphal command is a matter of guess. Ignaz Goldziher (1906, 321f) suggested that they may have resented a gesture that reminded them of heathen apotropaic ritual. Apart from this, they may have feared that raising one's hands towards heaven implies a theologically troubling, perhaps anthropomorphic, conception of divinity.[4]

Like other early *quṣṣāṣ*, Abū Idrīs al-Khawlānī related reports about the Prophet's battles (Lecker 2003, 69), but his biography includes another important detail. He is said

to have stressed on the *qāṣṣ*' knowledge of jurisprudence (*faqīh*) (ʿAthamina 1992, 63; cf. Juynboll 2007, 715). This requirement shows that during ʿAbd al-Malik's caliphate the *quṣṣāṣ* became the first legal specialists in Islam, in addition to being preachers and retellers of epic lore. This conclusion finds support in the report according to which Abū Idrīs al-Khawlānī—similarly to his Egyptian colleagues—officiated as both *qāṣṣ* and judge (Abū Zurʿa al-Dimashqī 1980, 1:200, no. 147). There is little reason to doubt that when ʿAbd al-Malik sacked Abū Idrīs, the caliph's decision applied to both of his positions, which were viewed as the two sides of the same coin.

During ʿUbayd b. ʿUmayr's lifetime, *qaṣaṣ* in Mecca was related by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. al-Qāsim b. Ḥasan (al-Fākihī 1994, 2:308, 338). At the beginning of the 120s, the office was held by ʿAbdallāh b. Kathīr al-Dārī (d. > 122/740). Of Persian extraction, ʿAbdallāh was a *mawlā* (client) of ʿAmr b. ʿAlqama al-Kinānī, and he made a livelihood as a perfume seller (*aṭṭār*) (Ibn Khallikān 1977, 3:41). The Meccan traditionist Sufyān b. ʿUyayna (d. 198/814) recalls hearing ʿAbdallāh's sermons in 122/740 and describes him as *qāṣṣ al-jamāʿa* (the community's *qāṣṣ*) (al-Bukhārī n.d., 5:181), which bears witness to the institutionalization of Meccan *qaṣaṣ* similar to that seen in the other regions of the caliphate. ʿAbdallāh b. Kathīr learned Qurʾānic recitation from Mujāhid b. Jabr (d. 101 – 104/718 – 722), the earliest historically attestable commentator of the Qurʾān (al-Balādhurī 1996, 13:52f), and later founded one of the seven authoritative readings of the Qurʾān. Thanks to his apprenticeship with Mujāhid, ʿAbdallāh became an exegete as well. His career exemplifies the shift from homiletic sermons, loosely related to Qurʾānic verses, to systematic exegesis. Most likely, it consisted of paraphrastic comments,[5] although ʿAbdallāh may have digressed to legal issues at times.

In Medina, Muslim b. Jundab al-Hudhalī (d. ca. 105/724) is remembered as the *qāṣṣ* of the Prophet's mosque. In addition to this, he led the prayer, recited the Qurʾān, and served as a judge (al-Balādhurī 1996, 11:257). Muslim b. Jundab was not paid when he assumed judgeship. Later on, ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (r. 99 – 101/717 – 720) began to pay him two dinars (Ibn Saʿd 2001, 7:422), perhaps monthly. According to al-Balādhurī, "he received an allowance together with the Qurʾān reciters, the jurisprudents, the poets, and the mosque attendants" (al-Balādhurī 1996, 11:257), which suggests that Muslim was paid separately for his various positions. We do not know whether Muslim was remunerated for his *qaṣaṣ* from the onset. If not, one would assume that during his tenure, *qaṣaṣ* and judgeship transformed from voluntary services for the public weal into paid offices. Be that as it may, informal *qaṣaṣ* persisted; to that effect, we may cite the report on the authority of Nāfiʿ, the *mawlā* of Ibn ʿUmar (Medina; d. ca. 117/735 – 736), that Ibn ʿUmar did not attend the sessions of *quṣṣāṣ* other than the community's *qāṣṣ* (ʿAbd al-Razzāq 2016, 3:496, no. 5558).

Whereas ʿAbdallāh b. ʿUmar respected only the community's *qāṣṣ*, his son, Sālim (d. 106/725), shunned *quṣṣāṣ* altogether (Ibn Saʿd 2001, 7:198). Sālim's

attitude is indicative of the transition in the course of which first/seventh-century *quṣṣāṣ* lost their significance for the preservation and transmission of knowledge. They were eclipsed by the rising star of *ḥadīth* transmitters (*muḥaddithūn*), who, instead of moral instruction and epic narratives about the past, turned their attention to the legal precedent of forebears enshrined in *ḥadīth* and eagerly demanded that each tradition be supplied with an *isnād* linking its transmitter with the earliest source. Some storytellers' resistance to embracing the recently introduced scholarly paradigm cast a pall of doubt on their dependability and value for the developing Islamic jurisprudence. Others were more receptive to the ongoing change: Many traditionists who flourished at the end of the first/seventh century were also known as *quṣṣāṣ* (for examples, see Armstrong 2017, 117ff).

The beginning of the second/eighth century witnessed a changing attitude to Qurʾānic text. The *quṣṣāṣ*' impassioned sermons, which enjoined piety and warned the audience of impending Apocalypse, at the expense of scholarly exactitude, now gave way to systematic efforts to derive legal norms from the Qurʾān's frequently cryptic language. The paradigm shift is implicated in a statement attributed to ʿAlī. The fourth caliph asks an unnamed *qāṣṣ* if he can differentiate the abrogating from the abrogated verses in the Qurʾān. As the man answers in the negative, ʿAlī exclaims, "You have perished, and you cause [others] to perish!" (Ibn Abī Shayba 1989, 5:290, no. 26 192). Key to understanding this passage is its reference to the theory of abrogation (*naskh*), according to which, in cases of normative contradiction, the later verses in the Qurʾān abrogate the earlier ones. ʿAlī's rebuke, which is undoubtedly anachronistic with respect to the fourth caliph's lifetime, exposes the *qāṣṣ*' exegetical incompetence. It breaks from the first/seventh-century usage of the Qurʾān for solely liturgical and homiletic purposes and endorses the newly introduced canonical understanding of the Qurʾān as a source for legal and theological norms.

Many *quṣṣāṣ* operated under political patronage, which undermined their authority. From a voluntary preacher and popular storyteller who foreboded Judgment Day and exhorted fellow Muslims in the mosque, many a *qāṣṣ* became a paid state official. Political conflicts throughout the Marwānid period eroded the rulers' reputation among pious Muslims and, by extension, discredited their appointed representatives. Recall Sulaym b. ʿItr's comparison between the early Marwānids, on the one hand, and Abū Bakr and ʿUmar, on the other, which was not in the formers' favor.

Along with the emergence of professional *muḥaddithūn*, these circumstances changed the scholarly and communal conception of the sources of Islamic law and those qualified to use them for the articulation of norms. If the *quṣṣāṣ* who officiated as *qāḍī*s dispensed justice in line with the precedent of the caliphs and their local representatives, since the beginning of the second/eighth century these sources were gradually superseded by the Qurʾān and prophetic precedent. The

muḥaddithūn were responsible for the collection of traditions about the Prophet's normative words and deeds. From their midst grew a new generation of jurists, who ousted the earlier *quṣṣāṣ*.

During the first half of the third/ninth century, *qaṣaṣ* homilies that vividly describe the torment of the grave, the Prophet's intercession in the hereafter, the scales on which each human being's actions will be measured on Judgment Day, and the narrow bridge that the resurrected will cross either to reach salvation in Paradise or to slip down into the abyss became instrumental in the construction of traditionalist theology. In the guise of Prophetic traditions, many of these stories were admitted into the Sunni *ḥadīth* collections and weaponized by traditionalist theologians in their fight against rationalist interpretation of dogma.

Conclusion

Muslim jurists were not the original promotors and users of Tradition. *Ḥadīth* came to be understood as legal precedent at a secondary stage of development; its earliest specimens were put into circulation by the Doomsday heralds – the *quṣṣāṣ*, who first appeared on the historical scene in the middle of the first/seventh century. Their sermons in the mosque summoned from the misty past memories about the Prophet's days and portrayed the ongoing conquests as an epic prelude to the impending eschatological drama. These homilies eventually gave rise to the *sīra* and *maghāzī* genre, laying the foundation for the second/eighth-century historical narratives. The early popular preachers and storytellers apparently held their sessions on a daily basis, sometimes annoying the audience with their pious litany. With the institutionalization of the *qāṣṣ*' craft, his sermons became sparser and likely limited to the Friday prayer ritual.

Qurʾānic verses provided the textual basis on which the *quṣṣāṣ* wove their narratives about the Prophet's life and Last Day tribulations. The initial exegetical exercises may be thought of as straightforward paraphrases of specific words and expressions. Sometimes, the *quṣṣāṣ* would digress to what Wansbrough described as "haggadic exegesis"; in our case, tales about the Arabs and the advent of their prophet, such as ʿUbayd b. ʿUmayr's account of the Prophet's first revelation, which builds on Q. 96: 1 – 5 (Juynboll 1994, p. 167). Cosmogonic myths and pre-Islamic prophets also figured in their repertoire (Armstrong 2017, p. 110). Apart from this, the first *quṣṣāṣ* circulated edifying stories that subsequently formed the backbone of the extensive body of exhortatory and dissuasive homiletics (*targhīb wa-tarhīb*) (Juynboll 1983, 11f).

The *qāṣṣ*' profession underwent a profound transformation in the second half of the first/seventh century. It was institutionalized under the first Umayyad caliph, Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān, and his immediate successors. Informal *qaṣaṣ* continued to be practiced, but from that point on, many *quṣṣāṣ* became paid state officials responsible for promoting the caliph's agenda among his subjects attending the

prayers in the mosque. Reports about *quṣṣāṣ* in Arabia, Syria, Egypt, and Iraq also indicate that *qaṣaṣ* was frequently combined with judgeship, and sometimes with other offices, including those of the Qurʾān reciter and the treasurer. The majority of the related reports come from Egypt, which may be explained with the composition from early on of catalogs with the names of Egyptian governors and judges. Be that as it may, the *quṣṣāṣ* became the first legal specialists in Islam and a hierarchy of *quṣṣāṣ* presided by the *qāṣṣ* and judge of Egypt evolved over time.

The emergence of classical *ḥadīth* in the second/eighth century spelled doom for the earlier *qaṣaṣ*. Unlike the *muḥaddithūn*, who based their traditions on chains of authoritative transmitters, the *qāṣṣ* could hardly identify the source and genealogy of his edifying tales. This rendered his material unverifiable, while his eloquent admonitions came to be viewed with methodological suspicion. From the perspective of *muḥaddithūn*, the *quṣṣāṣ* may have been wholesome to the community's piety, but their stories lacked the essentials of authenticity. The new critical approach to traditions, which gained systematic underpinning during the third/ninth century, reduced the *quṣṣāṣ* to insignificance and banished them from the ranks of reputable scholars.

The present survey is based on Islamic literary sources none of which dates back to the Umayyad period. Recent research into documentary sources, specifically papyri from Umayyad Egypt, has shown that the term *qāḍī* does not appear therein; judiciary functions were dispensed by the heads of rural districts and the governors of Fusṭāṭ (Tillier 2017, pp. 41 – 45). Although limited in breadth, the documentary evidence mirrors, as noted by Mathieu Tiller (2017, p. 41), a "different reality" compared with the literary accounts. This discrepancy does not necessarily imply that the institution of *qaḍāʾ* came into being under the early ʿAbbāsids, but it strongly suggests that a later designation was retroactively attached to an earlier institution. If the term *qāḍī* only became widespread in Muslim legal parlance in the second/eighth century, the frequent pairing of *qāṣṣ* and *qāḍī* in the description of Umayyad legal officials in Egypt would indicate that the term *qāṣṣ* was the original designation of the Umayyad judges. As the role and perception of the *qāṣṣ* changed over the second/eighth century, ʿAbbāsid historians began to pair it with their familiar *qāḍī* by way of clarification and disambiguation.

NOTES

1. In the present article, I apply a dual dating according to the Hijri lunar calendar and the Julian solar calendar.
2. The description of the *qāṣṣ* as a preacher and storyteller is an approximation intended for the non-specialist reader. On the semantic challenges facing the translation of the term *qāṣṣ*, see Armstrong 2017, pp. 6 – 9.

3. On the pre-Islamic roots of *qaṣaṣ*, see al-Najm 1967, 166f, Evstatiev 2003, p. 327; Juynboll 1982, p. 165. The pre-Islamic beginnings of *qaṣaṣ* are also implied in Armstrong's monograph, which, however, lacks a systematic source-critical underpinning.
4. Upon seeing a woman raise her forefingers during prayer, the Prophet's widow ʿĀʾisha forbade her from repeating the gesture with the words, "He is God the only One" (ʿAbd al-Razzāq 2016, 2:531, no. 3351). Using similar words, Ibn ʿUmar upbraided a certain man who was pointing with two of his fingers (ibid., 2:531, no. 3349). In a report that directly bears on our topic, an unnamed man is said to have raised his hands during a *qāṣṣ*' sermon, but Ibn ʿUmar beckoned him to stop (ibid., 2:530f, no. 3348). For a comprehensive though inconclusive discussion of the issue of hands raising, see Armstrong 2017, pp. 181 – 185.
5. Thus, ʿAbdallāh b. Kathīr paraphrased *āyat al-layl* (the sign of the night) in Q. 17:12 as *ẓulmat al-layl* (the darkness of the night) (al-Ṭabarī 1979 – 1987, 1:77).

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Professor Michael Lecker for his critical review of the initial draft of this article. All errors of fact and judgement are mine.

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